

In the claims:

1-19. (Cancelled)

20. (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:  
an array of firewall machines coupled in parallel with an IP-compliant  
network;  
wherein each of the firewall machines of the array comprising:  
a first and second set of virtual hosts, said first set of virtual hosts  
configured to interface an associated firewall machine with said IP-compliant network  
and said second set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall  
machine with a private network;  
DNS functionality associated with each of firewall machines of the array;  
a master configuration file associated with each of the firewall machines;  
and  
wherein an ensuing connection request is mapped to the first firewall  
machine of the array to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing  
connection request.

21. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein a  
connection request received from the IP-compliant network is mapped to said first set of  
virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

22. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein a connection request received from the private network is mapped to said second set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

23. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 20, wherein each of said firewall machines further comprises a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network.

24. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 23, wherein each of said firewall machines includes  $N + 1$  sets of virtual hosts.

25. (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:  
means for coupling a plurality of firewall means in parallel with an IP-compliant network;  
wherein each of said firewall means comprising:  
a first set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with said IP-compliant network and said second set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with a private network;  
means for providing DNS functionality associated with each of firewall means;  
master configuration means associated with each of the firewall machines;  
and  
means for mapping an ensuing connection request to the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

26. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the IP-compliant network to said first set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

27. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the private network to said second set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

28. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 25, further comprising HTML-based configuration means for updating said master configuration means over said IP-compliant network.

29. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 28, wherein each of said firewall means includes  $N + 1$  sets of virtual host means.

30. (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:  
an array of firewall machines coupled in parallel with an IP-compliant network;  
wherein each of the firewall machines of the array comprising:  
at least a first and second set of virtual hosts, said first set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with said IP-compliant network

and said second set of virtual hosts configured to interface an associated firewall machine with a private network;

DNS functionality associated with each of firewall machines of the array;  
a master configuration file associated with each of the firewall machines;  
a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network; and  
wherein an ensuing connection request is mapped to the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

31. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein a connection request received from the IP-compliant network is mapped to said first set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

32. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein a connection request received from the private network is mapped to said second set of virtual hosts on the first firewall machine of the array to respond to a DNS request.

33. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 30, wherein each of said firewall machines further comprises a special-purpose virtual host including an HTML-based configuration module for updating said master configuration files over said IP-compliant network.

34. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 33, wherein each of said firewall machines includes  $N + 1$  sets of virtual hosts.

35. (New) A load-sharing multi-homed firewall array comprising:  
means for coupling a plurality of firewall means in parallel with an IP-compliant network;  
wherein each of said firewall means comprising:  
a first set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with said IP-compliant network and said second set of virtual host means interfacing an associated firewall means with a private network;  
means for providing DNS functionality associated with each of firewall means;  
master configuration means associated with each of the firewall machines;  
HTML-based configuration means for updating said master configuration means over said IP-compliant network; and  
means for mapping an ensuing connection request to the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request associated with said ensuing connection request.

36. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the IP-compliant network to said first set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

37. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, further comprising means for mapping a connection request received from the private network to said second set of virtual host means on the first firewall means to respond to a DNS request.

38. (New) The load-sharing multi-homed firewall array of claim 35, wherein each of said firewall means includes  $N + 1$  sets of virtual host means.